

A Presentation to the
Virginia State Crime Commission
on the
Lawrenceville Correctional Center
Security Operations Review



502 East 11th Street · Suite 300 · Austin, Texas 78701 · 512 /476-4697

September 11, 2007

Purpose and Objectives

The primary purpose of the assessment was to assess the overall effectiveness of the institutions policies, procedures, and practices as they relate to the searches for and control of contraband within the institution.

MGT Approach

- Reviewed all relevant documents including policies, procedures, and reports related to the security operation of Lawrenceville including recent critical incident reports and available investigative reports related to contraband.
- Conducted interviews with administrative and line staff of the VaDOC, GEO, and the Lawrenceville CC.
- Completed an on-site review of the operation of the security systems of the institution.
- Interviewed key staff within the institution in order to fully understand the operations of the facility.
- Verified the status the operations through the review of data and records.

Actions Taken by VaDOC and GEO

Numerous steps had been taken prior to the completion of the MGT assessment by VaDOC and GEO:

- ◆ **Modified the recount procedures;**
- ◆ **Modified the front gate interlock system;**
- ◆ **Modified the Sally Port search procedures;**
- ◆ **Installed an additional walk thru gate at the Sally Port;**
- ◆ **Modified the handling of supplies and equipment into the institutional;**
- ◆ **Modified personal property search procedures;**
- ◆ **Purchased Ion-Scan to assist in drug detection; and**
- ◆ **Initiated acquisition of a drug dog.**

Drug Testing Protocols: Findings

- **The institutional testing practices negated the intent of the policy that the inmates be selected through random selection. The practice resulted in the tests being targeted tests.**
- **This practice skewed the results when compared to other institutions that were using the intended random selection process.**
- **On March 1, 2007 the Lawrenceville Correctional Center changed their drug testing policy from having the unit managers and command staff select the inmates to be drug tested each month to having an internal investigator select at random the inmates to be tested.**

Drug Testing Protocols: Findings

- **It was acknowledged that even this process on occasion mixed the random with those who are being targets for reasonable suspicion.**
- **Numbers indicate that the facility was not complying with the department policy to randomly test five percent of the population.**

Drug Testing Protocols: Recommendations

- **The VaDOC should standardize procedures for the selection of the random drug test by generating a listing of those inmates to be drug tested each month. This would eliminate any potential for a selection process that shows favoritism of any kind and also would generate a true random selection process that would permit a more accurate comparison of data from institution to institution.**
- **The institution and VaDOC should establish procedures that insure the selection of those to be randomly tested is decided outside the institution in order to insure impartiality and also insure the pool is a true random selection.**

Drug Testing Protocols: Recommendations

The VaDOC and the Contract Liaison should insure that the facility randomly tests the required five percent as required by departmental policy.

Human Resources: Findings

In reviewing the profile of security personnel as provided by human resource staff at Lawrenceville the following critical issues are cited:

- ◆ **66 percent of all security staff is female. Most female security staff are correctional officers.**
- ◆ **VaDOC policy prohibits female security personnel from performing pat-down searches on males.**
- ◆ **There was a 15 percent vacancy in security staff. At the time of this review there were 27 correctional officer vacancies with an additional ten officers in training and unavailable for duty.**
- ◆ **The prohibition of female staff conducting pat searches of males, combined with the fact that 66 percent of the security at Lawrenceville is female, have negatively impacted the overall effectiveness of the security operations of facility.**

Human Resources: Recommendations

- **Lawrenceville Correctional Center should initiate some action steps that could compensate for the present staff composition and the problems that arise from a combination of the policy and the high percentage of female security staff. This would include creating special gender specific posts that would have primary responsibility for conducting random pat searches of inmates throughout the compound on each shift.**
- **GEO should accelerate its efforts to fill the existing staff vacancies and eliminate the fluctuations from full-staffing to periods of high vacancy numbers in order to ensure that an adequate security work force is consistently maintain.**

Human Resources: Recommendations

- **The VaDOC should assess the feasibility and impact of eliminating the restriction on female officers conducting pat searches of males.**
- **GEO should initiate steps to accelerate the hiring of correctional officers for the facility with the goal of reducing the vacancy rate of correctional officers to five to seven percent.**
- **GEO should conduct a formal recruitment and retention study to determine the specific reasons for the high level of turnover at Lawrenceville and to identify the measures that could be initiated to stabilize the work force.**
- **GEO should establish a semi-annual retention plan that will identify adjustments to the current hiring process that will result in a reduction in the existing staff turnover rate.**

Operation of Main Entrance: Finding

There appeared to a lack of consistency in the application of preventive measures in place at the main entrance to detect drugs and/or cell phones being introduced into the facility by staff, volunteers or official visitors.

Operation of Main Entrance: Recommendations

- **Ensure a supervising employee of the rank of lieutenant or higher is present in the main entrance area at least thirty minutes prior to the start of every shift to provide supervision and support to staff assigned to the area, ensure compliance of all existing policies, and to improve the consistency of practices and operations of the area.**
- **Conduct periodic process and system checks of current policies utilized at the main entrance area. Such system checks would involve testing the effectiveness of the search procedures and should be used as an educational tool to improve the existing security plan.**

Operation of Main Entrance: Recommendations

- **Conduct regular refresher training to all security staff on proper entry procedures and search policies and requirements.**

Operation of Main Entrance: Recommendations

- **Place a surveillance camera in the main entrance area to provide remote observation and review by supervisory staff of all processing activities.**
- **Prevent staff from remaining in the “sterile” section of the main entrance area until they comply with all entry policies including clearance through the walk thru metal detector.**
- **Require staff and official visitors that do not clear the walk thru metal detector to be pat-down searched and screened by the hand held metal detector to identify the location of the metal content. Current inconsistent practice is to conduct a pat-down search only and not to determine or explore the cause of the alarm activation.**

Operation of Main Entrance: Recommendations

- **Initiate a requirement that a certain percentage of randomly selected staff entering the facility shall be subject to enhanced searches that should include a thorough pat search, removal of shoes and all outer clothing, check by a hand held metal detector, etc.**

Inmate/Housing Searches: Findings

- **It is the current practice at the facility to assign cell searches by designating odd-numbered cells to the 1st shift and even-numbered cells to the 2nd shift. It was explained the implementation of this process was designed to reduce confusion for the officers who were required to randomly select cells for searches.**
- **In reviewing the Monthly Shakedown Reports, the project team noted that there were occasions when the requisite numbers of searches were not performed.**
- **The pat-searches monitored by the project team did not appear to be conducted in accordance with policy #08.009, section II.B.**

Inmate/Housing Searches: Findings

- **It was previously reported that there are a limited number of male staff available on a shift. Since males are the only ones who can conduct a pat-down or strip search on an inmate and there are often less than eight male line staff assigned to work a shift, it is extremely difficult to routinely perform searches of inmates moving about the facility. There are six major Living Units, segregation and medical, resulting in a total of eight living units not to mention the common areas such as dining rooms, classrooms, recreation areas, etc.**

Inmate/Housing Searches: Recommendations

- **The VaDOC should consider eliminating the prohibition of cross gender searches of males by female officers.**
- **Revise the practice of having 1st shift search odd-numbered cells and 2nd shift search even-numbered cells to improve unpredictability.**
- **Consider additional supervisory oversight to ensure proper pat and strip-search techniques are being used.**
- **Increase the number of pat-searches during mass movements and conduct the searches at both entry and exit points of major common areas including dining room, recreational areas, and educational classroom.**

Visiting Process and Operation: Findings

- **At the time of the project team's observations it was noted that, unlike official visitors and employees, the inmates' visitors were not allowed to proceed past the metal detector if it alarmed. On numerous occasions the visitor was sent through the detector two or more times, removing jewelry, shoes, belts, or other items until the detector no longer alarmed.**
- **Due to the physical configuration of the entry way, the completion of the visitor registration process was hampered by the fact that visitors passing through the metal detector compete for the same space as visitors checking in *and* out from visitation.**

Visiting Process and Operation: Findings

- **After the pat search is completed, the visitor returns to the waiting area and can mingle with other visitors who have not been searched thereby negating the effectiveness of the procedure.**
- **Observations of the search procedures of inmates entering and exiting the visitation room showed that clothing was not thoroughly searched on a consistent basis.**
- **The Pan-Tilt-Zoom camera has very good image quality but is hampered by its location at one end of the room away from the majority of tables.**

Visiting Process and Operation: Findings

- **In order to record an incident occurring in the visiting room, the camera view must be transferred to another larger monitor linked to a VCR. At the time of the inspection the VCR was not operable and had been in that condition for an unspecified length of time.**
- **Visiting room inmate workers are pat-searched like all other inmates entering the visiting room. They are only searched again at the conclusion of the day prior to returning to the interior of the facility.**

Visiting Process and Operation: Recommendations

- **Install an additional Pan-Tilt-Zoom camera in the visiting room. The second camera would replace the four small stationary cameras which have limited image quality.**
- **These cameras should also be linked to a digital recorder that would permit constant recording of all the cameras in the area. A digital recording system would also permit long term storage of the recordings.**
- **Reorganize visitor processing flow to allow presentation of *Registration* form prior to entrance to the metal detector so that inmate visit eligibility could be immediately verified.**

Visiting Process and Operation: Recommendations

- **Erect some type of barrier to deter commingling of searched and unsearched visitors in the waiting room.**
- **Consider strip-searching all inmates entering the visiting room not just when exiting.**

Investigative Procedures: Findings

- **The absence of drug dogs within the facility has hampered the deterrence and enforcement procedures as it relates to drugs.**
- **The project team was impressed with the efforts of both the institutional investigators and the investigators at the VaDOC. Clearly they have a grasp of the problems that the facility faces and have aggressively pursued prosecution when it is appropriate warranted.**

Investigative Procedures: Recommendations

- **GEO should maintain and expand the presence of drug dogs within the institution. As noted earlier in this report GEO has already taken steps to initiate this recommendation.**

Training: Findings

- **It was reported that the Field Training Officer program includes four trained staff. The training manager feels the institution needs to maintain a level of 12 FTO's to fully meet the needs of the staff being hired at the facility. Selection and training of these staff members are again done in conjunction with the staff of the VaDOC training academy**
- **Observations of staff during their performance of their duties indicates the training programs have been effective in preparing and sustaining a professional work force.**

Training: Recommendations

- **Given the level of turnover at the facility it is recommended that the facility identify, train, and maintain a cadre of at least 12 field training officers.**

Other Key Recommendations

- **The VaDOC should review the role and reporting structure of the contract liaison to insure that areas of non-compliance such as reflected in the failure to test five percent of the population that are reported through agency channels are aggressively and immediately addressed and corrected.**
- **GEO should limit the number of staff involved in the delivery of legal mail to individual inmates in order to improve consistency and minimize the potential for staff to be compromised.**

Other Key Recommendations

- **Consider additional training and supervisory oversight of the personal property function to ensure inmates' property is examined for tampering and that all containers are thoroughly inspected.**
- **GEO should pursue the acquisition of a package x-ray machine to permit ongoing inspection for contraband of packages, parcels, etc.**

Summary

- **The leadership of the VaDOC and administrators of Lawrenceville have recognized that a problem exists and have taken aggressive action, including initiating this independent review, to identify the possible contributing factors to the situation and to implement appropriate corrective action.**
- **Many of the problems reported in this final report have been previously identified through reviews and assessments initiated by the VaDOC in the later part of 2006 and early in 2007.**
- **As can be seen from the drug testing results for 2007, these actions are already impacting the presence of drugs within the institution.**

Summary

- **The systems, procedures, and policies are in place at Lawrenceville that will, and has to a large degree, permitted the situation with access to contraband to be corrected through a strong response by both GEO and the VaDOC.**
- **It is our belief that the problems we observed and documented are easily correctable and will result in significant reductions in the incidence of contraband within the institution.**